

Community Preservation Act Committee- Proposal Request Form for FY 2017

Project Title:

_____ Protection of the Cushman Brook—Stosz and Stowes Properties _____

CPA funding category: Check all that apply

<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Housing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Open Space
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historic Preservation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recreation

Amount of CPA Funds Requested:

\$ \$84,668.00 _____

Submitting Entity:

_____ Town of Amherst _____

Contact Person:

_____ David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager _____

Phone: 259-3002 _____

Email: ziomekd@amherstma.gov _____

Please complete this form in its entirety and include the following in your proposal.

Overview of Proposal: Please describe your project and your feasibility analysis.

In July 2015 the Town submitted a grant application to the Local Acquisitions For Natural Diversity (LAND) program to acquire approximately 14.3 acres of open space on three properties along the Cushman Brook in North Amherst. The properties are adjacent to Town Conservation Land and would increase the connectivity of preserved land along the Cushman Brook Corridor, including 1,750 ft. of frontage along the Cushman Brook. The properties remain undeveloped woodland and wetlands that directly impact the brook such that acquisition would safeguard areas of priority and prime habitat that the Town of Amherst and partners—Kestrel Trust, Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, CPA Committee, and the Commonwealth—have worked for more than thirty years to protect.

The Stosz & Stowes properties are located on either side of East Leverett Road along the Cushman Brook in North Amherst. The properties consist of two areas: Area 1 includes eight acres of undeveloped woodland and wetland including approximately 1,750 ft. of the Cushman Brook, which runs along the southern boundary and meanders through the eastern side of the area. Area 2 includes 6.34 acres, consisting primarily of undeveloped woodland that drains directly into the Cushman Brook and has a spur of the Cushman Brook Trail running through the northern section. See attached maps identifying the properties.

Describe how your request meets the CPA criteria:

1. Description of funding needed, including:

- a. Documentation of cost estimates, budget
- b. Other sources of funding, e.g., grants, self-funding, fund-raising
- c. Timeline on how CPA funds would be spent, including over multiple years

The budget for the project includes acquisition cost, recording fees, title certification, property survey and management. As part of the LAND grant application the Town had a formal appraisal completed for the properties that determined the

acquisition cost. In terms of management of the property, the Town will work with the Kestrel Land Trust to develop a baseline report, Conservation Restriction and Management Plan.

Costs	LAND Grant	CPA	Total
Acquisition Cost:	\$178,500.00	\$76,500	\$255,00.00
Recording Fees:	\$157.50	\$67.50	\$225.00
Title Certification:	\$700.00	\$300.00	\$1,000.00
Property Survey:	\$4,200.00	\$1,800.00	\$6,000.00
Management:	\$0.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00
TOTALS	\$183,557.50	\$84,667.50	\$268,225.00

2. Urgency of the Project, if any.

Although the property owners have been working with the Town and support the LAND grant application, they would like to sell the properties, particularly Area 2 along East Leverett Road. It is feasible to develop at least two housing units on this property that could take advantage of the exiting driveway that crosses the lot to serve the adjacent property. In recent years, since 2000, single family homes have been developed along East Leverett Road.

The LAND grant program requires that funding be allocated next year in order to complete the land acquisition.

3. Estimated timeline from receipt of funds to Project completion.

It is estimated that the Town would acquire the property by June 30, 2017, at which time the funds would be fully expended.

4. Acquisition or preservation of threatened resources.

The Town’s Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) describes the Mill River/Cushman Brook corridor as “...containing above-average water quality and is an area known for its recreational value to Amherst residents and visitors alike. The corridor is significant to many nesting bird species as well as any number of mammals including moose, turkey, deer and bear.” The OSRP identifies the corridor from Puffer’s Pond to Leverett as containing hundreds of acres of unprotected land and as an excellent opportunity to work with private landowners to preserve this section of Amherst.

The Stosz & Stowes property is one of the few remaining unprotected pieces of land within the Cushman Brook/Mill River riparian corridor. The Town of Amherst has worked for decades with state agencies, private landowners and local land trusts to piece together this protected area. Town conservation land acquired using LAND grant funds abuts Area 2 to the north and east, and additional conservation land abuts Area 1 to the west, totaling over 85 acres of adjacent conservation lands. The acquisition of this property is critical in preserving this very important corridor that runs from the Cushman Brook watershed in the Towns of Shutesbury and Leverett to Puffer's Pond, an extremely popular swimming and fishing destination, and along the Mill River as it flows through north Amherst. The Cushman Brook is one of the healthiest streams in Amherst and the region with excellent water quality providing high quality aquatic habitat. It's a perennial stream and prime fishery with natively reproducing Brook trout. This purchase is an opportunity to continue to protect the health of the Cushman Brook, and thereby the health and safety of Puffer's Pond, and increase a contiguous block of preserved land used as a wildlife corridor and for passive recreation.

Area 1 currently consists of undeveloped woodland, forested wetland, and the pools, small streams and banks of the Cushman Brook. All of Area 1 is within the flood zone of the Brook and is considered Living Waters Core Habitat. Area 1 is also entirely within NHESP Estimated and Priority Habitat for Rare and Endangered Species, as well as BioMap2 Core Habitat. Area 2 currently consists of undeveloped wooded upland that at first slopes gently upward away from East Leverett Road and then climbs steeply to the north; the entire area slopes toward the Brook. Area 2 also has a driveway easement across the southern portion. Both areas are mapped within BioMap 2 Critical Natural Landscape.

5. Population(s) to be served by the Project.

The Cushman Brook is used recreationally for fishing, hiking, picnicking, and birding. The path of the Brook is adjacent to East Leverett Road within Area 1 providing easy access for passive recreation. In addition, the Brook feeds Puffer's Pond, the most popular conservation area in Amherst, used by thousands of people annually from New England and beyond. The Town plans to manage Area 1 for conservation purposes, allowing passive recreation but not providing maintained trails or access because of its high ecological value. Area 2 currently has a spur of the Cushman Brook Trail running across its northern section and the trailhead with parking is adjacent to the southeast corner of the area. The Cushman Brook Trail is currently used by hikers, bikers, birders, cross-country skiers, and picnickers. As part of this property acquisition, the Town proposes to formalize the spur trail to create a loop back to the Cushman Brook Trail that would bring users up to the top of the hill. The Town also plans to actively manage approximately 5 acres of forest land in Area 2.

6. How will the CPA investment in your property, facility or project be maintained over time?

The LAND grant program requires that a baseline report and management plan be in place before they provide reimbursement. The land will be under the care and control of the Conservation Commission and preserved through a perpetual restriction. The Town will work with the Kestrel Land Trust to develop a baseline report, Conservation Restriction and Management Plan. Staff from Kestrel Trust will make periodic and annual inspections of the properties and Town conservation staff will maintain the trails and parking area, as well as help to address any other management issues. The wooded section of Area 2 will also be managed as forest land.

7. Which relevant Town committees and/or commissions are you working with?

The Conservation Commission fully supported the LAND grant application and continues to support the preservation of the Cushman Brook Corridor.

The Conservation Commission will review this proposal in December or January.

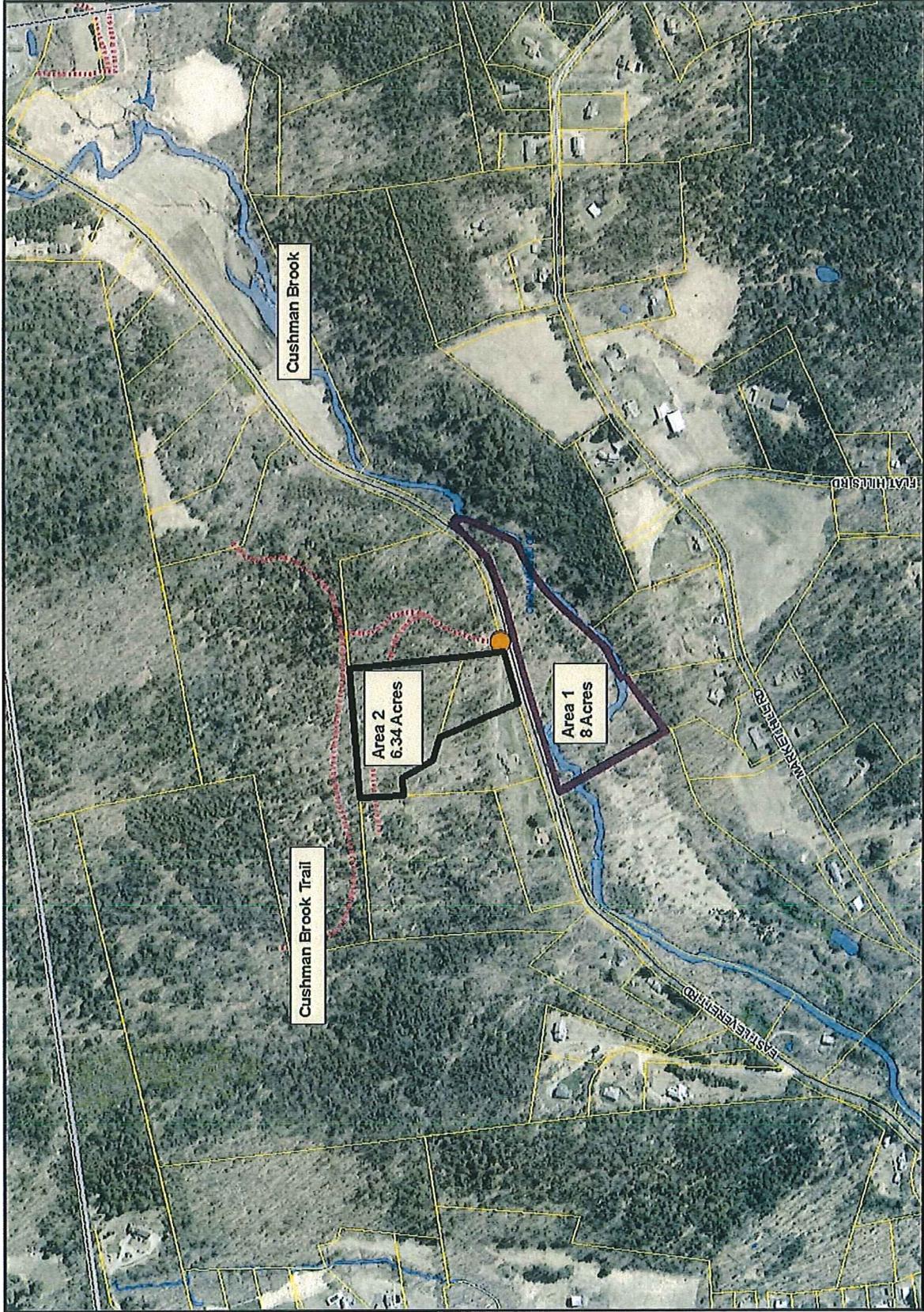
8. Other information regarding the Project deemed necessary for CPAC

**LAND Grant FY 2016
Stosz Property -
Protection of Cushman
Brook Corridor**

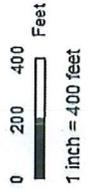


Figure 2: Site Locus

-  Stosz Property - Area 1
-  Stosz Property - Area 2
-  Trailhead



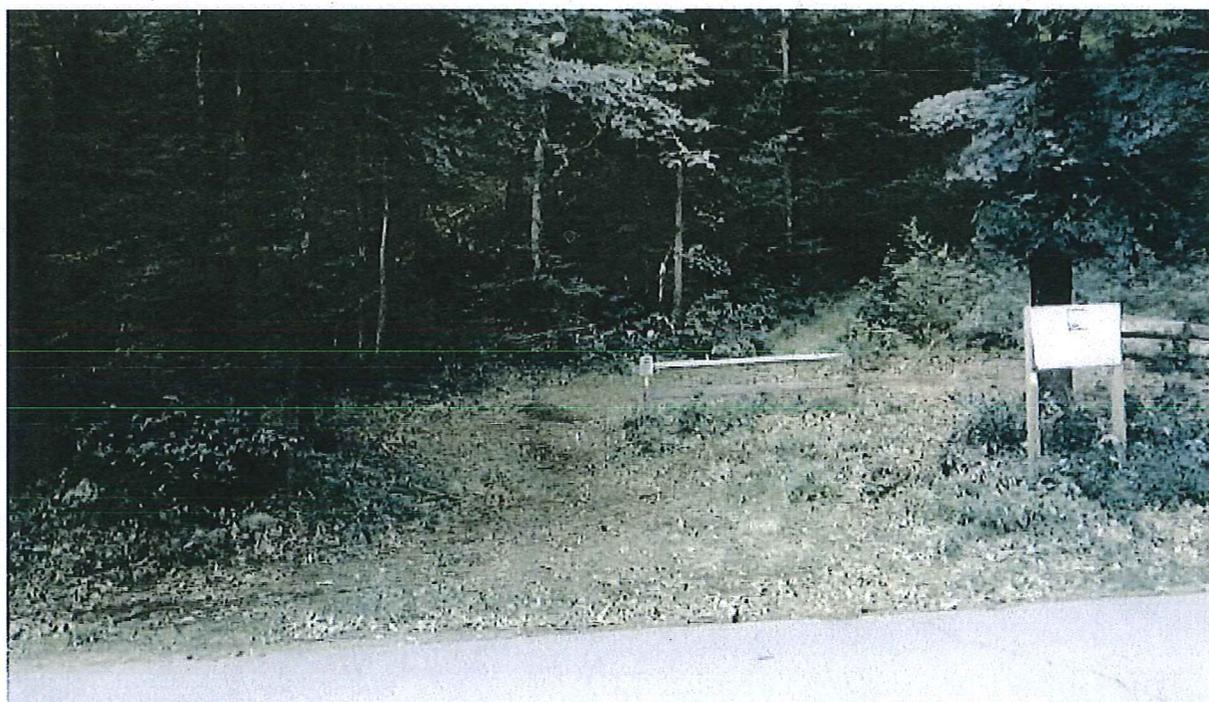
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Photographs of Stosz & Stowes Property



Area 1: Cushman Brook



Area 2: Trailhead for Cushman Brook Trail adjacent to SE corner of Area 2.



Area 2: Spur of Cushman Brook Trail



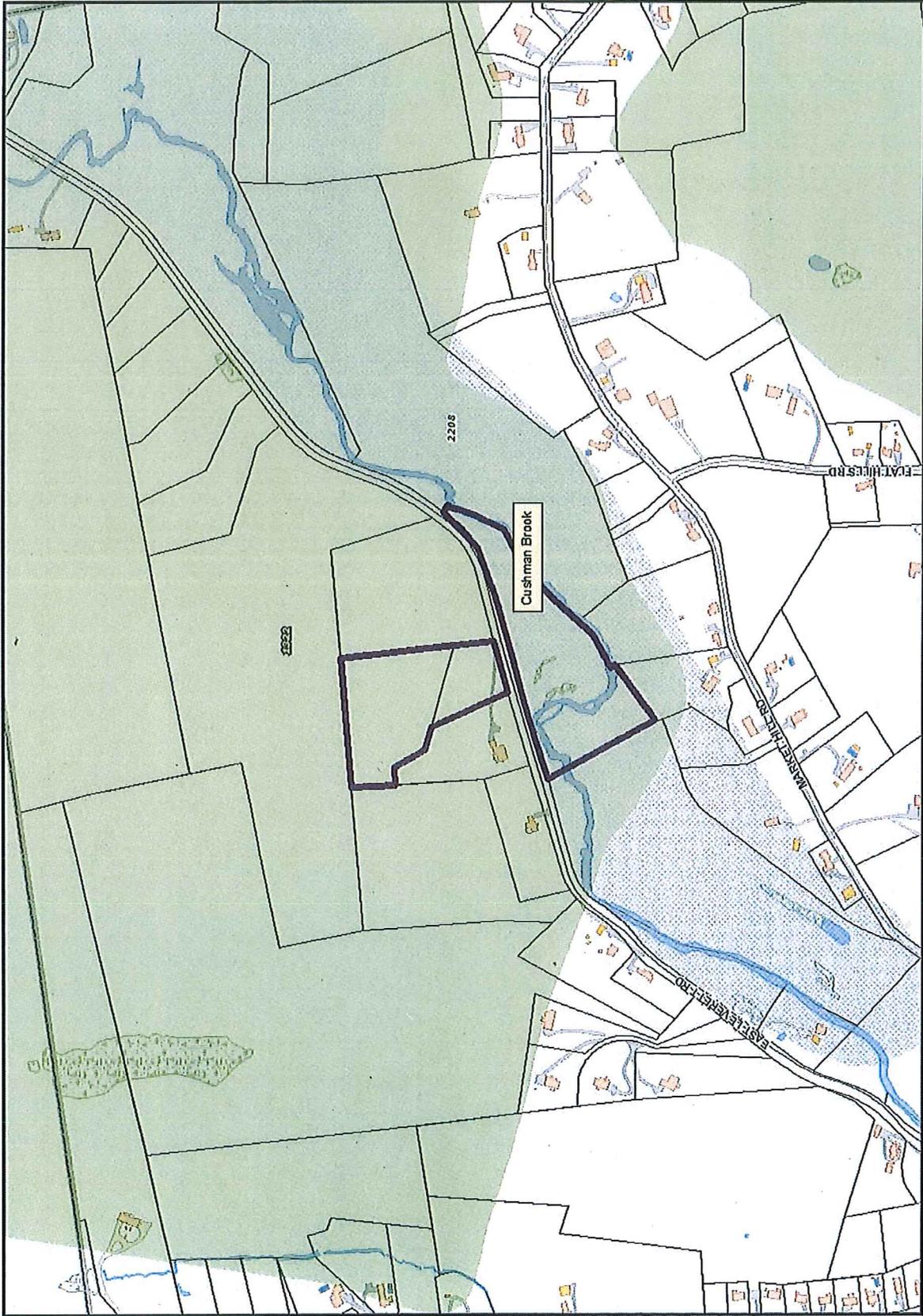
Area 2: Wooded upland along spur of Cushman Brook Trail.

**LAND Grant FY2016
Stosz Property -
Protection of Cushman
Brook Corridor**



**Figure 4: BioMap 2
Habitat**

- Stosz Property - Area 1
- Stosz Property - Area 2
- Local Roads
- Major Roads
- State Routes
- ☼ BioMap2 Core Habitat
- ☼ BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape



0 200 400 Feet
1 inch = 400 feet

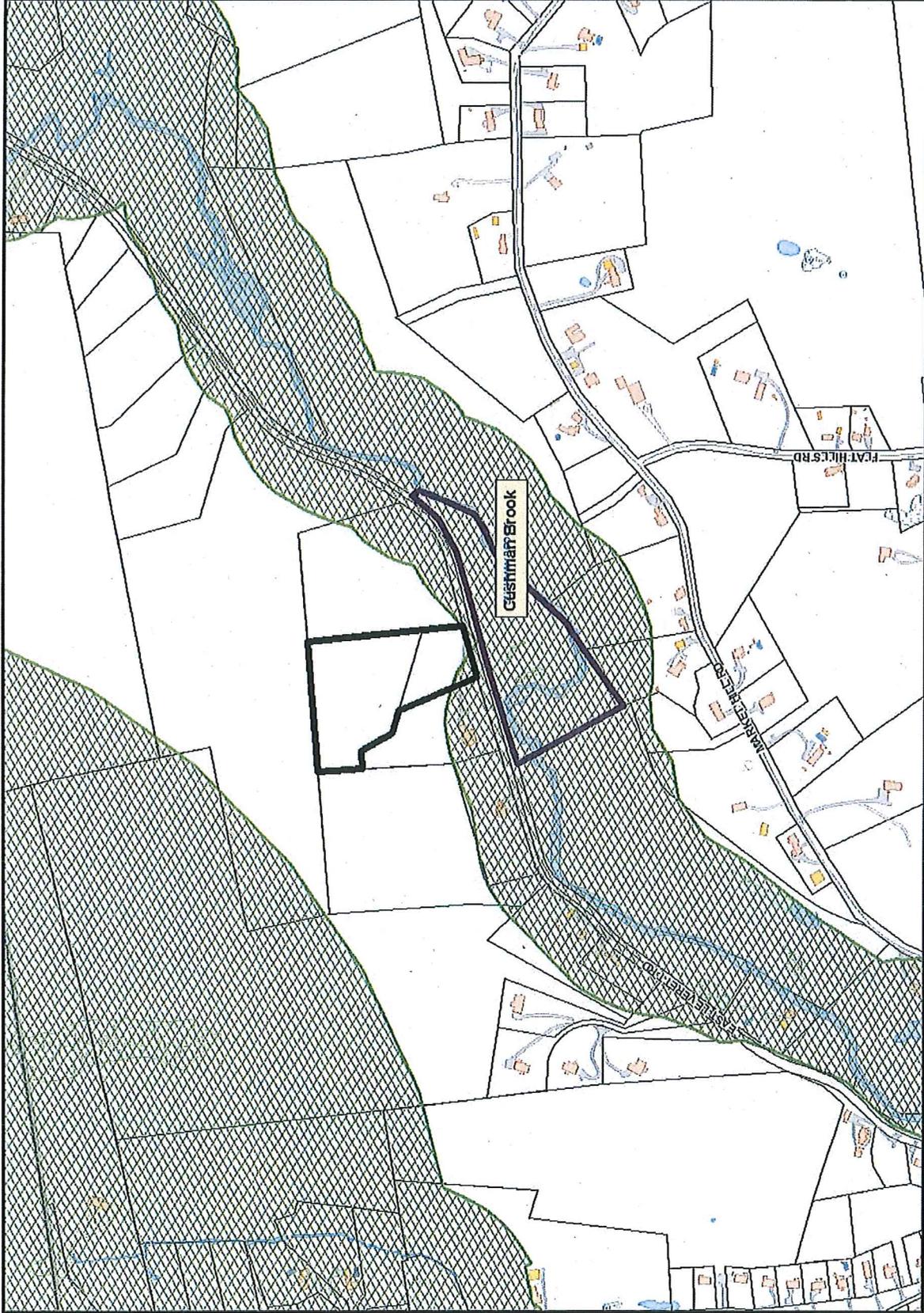
**LAND Grant FY2016
Stosz Property -
Protection of Cushman
Brook Corridor**

Town of Amherst



**Figure 5: Estimated
& Priority Habitat**

- Stosz Property - Area 1
- Stosz Property - Area 2
- Potential Vernal Pools
- NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
- NHESP Priority Habitat
- NHESP Estimated Habitat



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